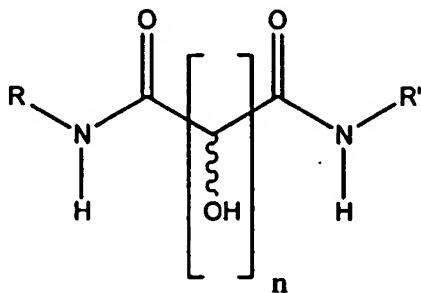


IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (canceled)

2. (currently amended) ~~The A gelling agent or thickener of claim 1 in the form of a~~
N,N'-disubstituted aldaramide, a N,N'-disubstituted pentaramide, or a derivative thereof having
the formula



wherein n is 3 or 4, and wherein R and R' represent the same or different substituents chosen selected from the group of substituted or unsubstituted, ~~branched, possibly aromatic groups~~ containing, cyclic or linear alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl groups having from 1 up to 40 carbon atoms.

3. (currently amended) The gelling agent or thickener of claim 2, wherein R and R' each ~~represent are~~ independently selected from the a linear, branched, or cyclic alkyl group of cycloalkyl groups having 4-20 carbon atoms.

4. (currently amended) The gelling agent or thickener of claim 3, wherein R and R' each are independently selected from cyclohexyl and cyclododecyl ~~the group of cycloalkyl groups~~ having 4-16 carbon atoms.

5. (previously presented) The gelling agent or thickener of claim 2, wherein R and R' are the same.

⁵
6. (currently amended) The gelling agent or thickener of claim ~~1~~¹ being an N,N'-dicycloalkyl ~~degucaramide~~ D-glucaramide.

⁶
7. (currently amended) A process for preparing a the gelling agent or thickener of claim 2, said process comprising:

oxidation of an aldose or pentose to form an aldaric or pentaric acid or a salt thereof, and
condensation of the aldaric or pentaric acid or a the salt thereof with a primary amine of the formula RNH_2 and a primary amine of the formula $R'NH_2$.

⁷
8. (original) The process of claim ~~7~~⁶, wherein the aldaric or pentaric acid or salt thereof is activated before condensation by lactonization and/or esterification.

⁸
9. (original) The process of claim ~~7~~⁶ wherein the aldose or pentose is selected from the group consisting of allose, altrose, glucose, mannose, gulose, idose, galactose, talose, ribose, arabinose, xylose, lyxose, and derivatives thereof.

⁹
10. (original) The process of claim ~~9~~⁸, wherein the derivative is a deoxy aldose or pentose, an ether, or an ester.

¹⁰
11. (original) The process of claim ~~8~~⁷ wherein the aldose or pentose is selected from the group consisting of allose, altrose, glucose, mannose, gulose, idose, galactose, talose, ribose, arabinose, xylose, lyxose, and derivatives thereof.

¹¹
12. (original) The process of claim ~~11~~¹⁰, wherein the derivative is a deoxy aldose or pentose, an ether, or an ester.

¹²
13. (currently amended) A process for preparing a gel or ~~thickening~~ thickened composition comprising:

¹
mixing the gelling agent or thickener of claim ~~1~~¹ with a composition, thus transforming the composition into a gel or thickened composition.

¹³14. (original) The process of claim ¹²13 wherein the composition comprises an organic solvent.

¹⁴15. (original) The process of claim ¹³14 wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of aromatic and non-aromatic hydrocarbons, alcohols, ethers, esters, aldehydes, alkanolic acids, epoxides, amines, halogenated hydrocarbons, silicon, vegetable oils, phosphoric esters, sulfoxides, water and mixtures thereof.

¹⁵16. (previously presented) The process of claim ¹²13 wherein the gelling agent or thickener is mixed with the composition in a ratio of between about 0.01 and about 50% by weight.

¹⁶17. (original) The process of claim ¹⁴15 wherein the mixture of the gelling agent or thickener and the composition is heated, or wherein a solution of the gelling agent or thickener is added to or sprayed into the composition.

¹⁷18. (original) The process of claim ¹⁵16 wherein the mixture of the gelling agent or thickener and the composition is heated, or wherein a solution of the gelling agent or thickener is added to or sprayed into the composition.

¹⁸19. (currently amended) A gel comprising the gelling agent or thickener of claim ¹12.

¹⁹20. (previously presented) A gel produced by the process of claim ¹²13.